

WE had the pleasure a short time ago of witnessing some very clever wrestling at the Camberwell Palace of Varieties, by Antonio Pierri's troupe of International Lady

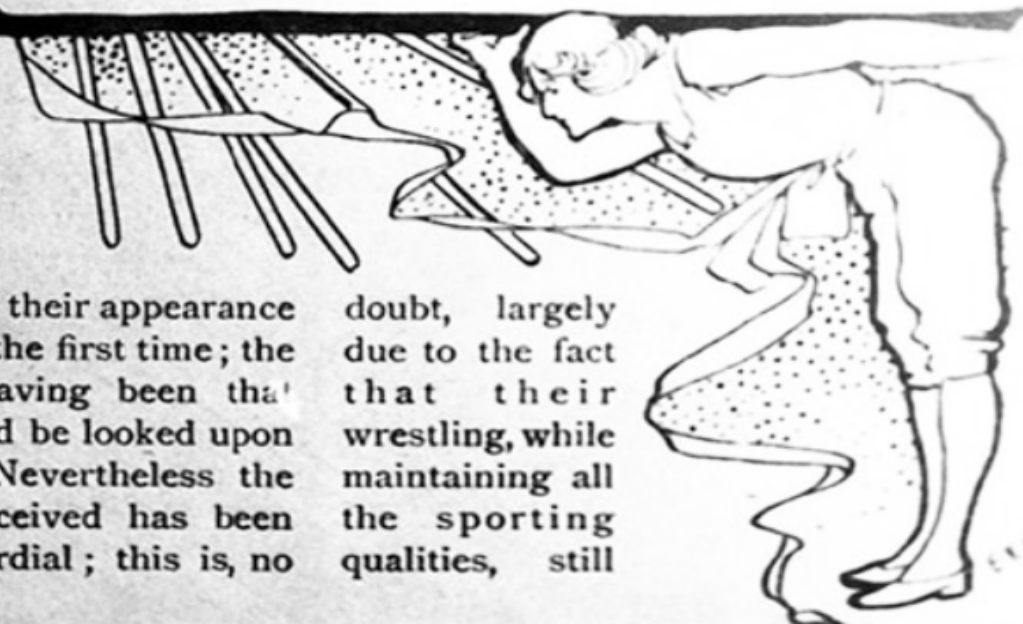
INTERNATIONAL LADY WRESTLERS



Wrestlers, and thanks to the courtesy of the management, were also enabled to obtain an interview with them.

The troupe have made their appearance in England this year for the first time; the opinion among them having been that wrestling for ladies would be looked upon with disfavour here. Nevertheless the reception they have received has been most enthusiastic and cordial; this is, no

doubt, largely due to the fact that their wrestling, while maintaining all the sporting qualities, still



possesses a certain refinement which we seldom find in male wrestlers, and also proves that "Merrie England" is not

losing her love for sport in the pursuit of commercial interests.

We may be a nation of shopkeepers, yet



with pride be it said, we are a nation of sportsmen too.

Those people who know little or nothing about wrestling are apt to turn up the whites of their eyes and clasp their hands in horror at the idea of women taking it up, the impression being that it is ungainly and rough, yet we feel sure the most scrupulous could find nothing to object to in Antonio Pierri's troupe. Their performance is given in the classic "Graeco-Roman" style, while the knowledge and agility they display rivals many of their brethren of the craft.

We doubt if an exhibition of the "Catch-as-catch-can" would be as pleasing, as it seems bound to entail roughness, but we should not like to commit ourselves by making a statement as to its undesirability for ladies, until we have seen what these

clever young athletes would make of it. We think those people who have seen their performance will probably change their opinion as to the suitability of wrestling for women



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After all, why should girls be debarred from an exercise which, we believe, is besides being a sport which calls for cool clear-headed decision and even



almost universally acknowledged as the best all round training for the muscles, temper? Exercise for women has been tabooed from time immemorable, but

there have always been a few who have broken through the bonds. Time was when little girls were told it was unladylike to run or let the arms swing when walking, but with the help of our American sisters we have broken down

country is gradually taking her place in the ranks of her sister workers, at the desk or in the showroom, without meeting the glances of scorn or airs of superiority which were bestowed on her in the days of long ago if she dared to cast aside the



the barriers of demurely clasped hands and short steps, and day by day are breaking away from the prejudices that still remain.

The woman athlete in the good old

bonds of conventionality. Whatever may be said of professional athletes, they have to work hard and live harder if they are to obtain and keep any position in the ranks of their fellow competitors, they of

all people may be truly said to live by the sweat of their brow.

One of the strong points of an English audience is their love of good sport and fair play, and they certainly have both in the case of the lady wrestlers, who work upon the most scientific lines, their whole performance being clean, smart and sportsmanlike. In the "Græco-Roman" style they are never allowed to touch one another below the hips. This rule is strictly adhered to by the combatants, although the provocation to break it must be great sometimes, when they find themselves in a tight place.

Mr. Armstrong, of the "Sporting Life," was acting as timekeeper and referee when we first had the pleasure of witnessing their performance.

Miss Bradford (England), is almost the ideal type of acknowledged English beauty, both in figure, grace and buoyant health, in fact she tells us that none of the girls have ever been ill enough to forego their turn since the troupe has been formed; this is saying a good deal, considering the amount of hard work of which it consists. They usually do two performances every evening, and on matinee days one in the afternoon as well.

Miss Bradford, as champion, offered £10 to any lady wrestler she failed to throw in fifteen minutes in the "Græco-Roman" style. This challenge was accepted by a Miss Williams, who, unfortunately, never turned up to keep the appointment.

The Manager of the Royal, Holborn, afterwards offered £25, with the result that on Tuesday, 22nd April, a contest took place with Miss Hamilton, of Peterborough, the outcome being that Miss Bradford threw her opponent in 11 min. 32 sec., after a very exciting struggle.

When there are no outside combatants, the members of the troupe wrestle together. On the occasion of our visit, Miss Keziah

(the Arabian champion) was Miss Bradford's opponent; though somewhat shorter in stature she is remarkably lissome, and there really seems very little to choose between them in the matter of strength, and I might add also in the matter of beauty, which applies equally to the other ladies, although they are all absolutely of different types.

Miss Keziah holds medals for gymnastics as well as for wrestling, but of course it is out of the question, she said, to wear them whilst performing, as they would be likely to get in the way and hurt the competitors.

Miss Macgregor (Scotland) tells us that her father was also a wrestler, and she belongs to a good old Scottish clan. She and Miss Noack (Germany) were contesting when we saw them, while Miss Rosita (Spain) and Miss Antonetta (Italy), of whom we were unfortunately unable to obtain a photograph, gave us an exciting five minutes.

All these ladies are eagerly looking forward to challenges, and to tell the truth, they all seem well in form to accept them. "It would be something to think about and live for," they remark, with enthusiasm sparkling in their eyes; it is really quite refreshing to find so much of it in this work-a-day world.

The "Græco-Roman" style is the most popular, but they tell us they have also learned to wrestle in the "Catch-as-catch-can" and "Cornish" styles.

We happened, while waiting to see the ladies, to overhear a little conversation between Mr. Elliot, their M.C., and another gentleman, which we presume related to the "Catch-as-catch-can."

"This is how they treat me," said Mr. Elliot, turning up his sleeve and displaying an arm, which from his manner, we conjectured, must be pretty well decorated. "They very nearly skin my arms and make my elbows quite raw. Just look!"

"You wrestle with them, then?"

"Oh yes, I train with them you see,

We wondered we had not noticed more bruises on the arms of the ladies, but we felt pretty certain that in spite of what he



said, Mr. Elliot was quite proud of those arms of his.

After this conversation we broached the subject of bruises to the wrestlers, and were told that a nice warm bath soon

They always let two hours elapse between a meal and their performance, otherwise they don't study dieting in any degree.

We noticed particularly with Miss



cured them. We did not like to ask if Mr. Elliot had tried the remedy. Stiffness, too, we were informed was soon exercised away.

Bradford's wrestling that she displayed the true English systematic coolness, having her opponent in a firm position she would look up for a moment with a

thoughtful expression on her face, which plainly said, "Now, which will be the best way to get her shoulders to the ground?"

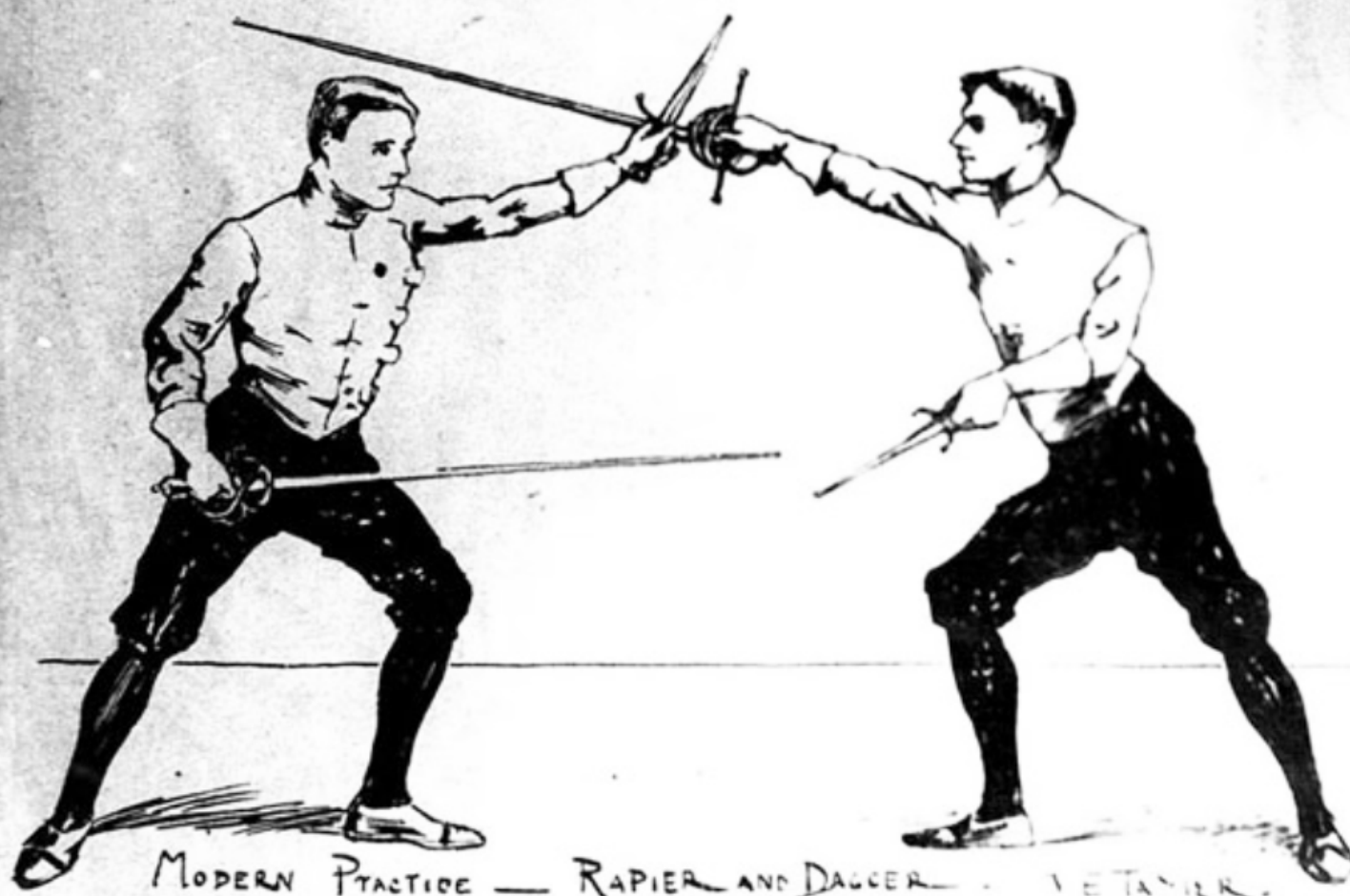
They tell us they quite forget all about the audience while wrestling.

Antonio Pierri, who is so well known as the "Terrible Greek," does not seem very formidable when in conversation with you, whatever he may appear on the stage. He told us he spent the greater part of his time following them up after their bouts, gathering up the fragments that remained. Herewith he pulled from his pocket some pieces of much crushed ribbon. We were

glad to find that the fragments were of such an innocent nature, and not as might be supposed, portions of arms, legs, and locks of torn-out hair. But, joking aside, we found the wrestling most interesting, both for its sporting qualities and its good effect upon the health and figures of the wrestlers. It is not one of those things which having seen once you feel indifferent as to whether you witness it again, on the contrary, to view the performance of these ladies once, only makes you keener to see more of them in their craft, which until now has been condemned for the weaker sex.

E. K. & L. M. READER.

The photographs used in this article have been taken by the Elite Portrait Co., High Holborn, W.



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